

Anatomy of a School Shooting

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On May 15, 2000, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office released the official report on the shooting deaths of fifteen people at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Not surprisingly, the report confirmed the version of events that had been reported ad nauseam for the past year by the US press.

The official story (for those who are just emerging from a coma or for some other reason inexplicably missed the saturation coverage of this event) goes something like this: Two disaffected teenagers named Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, acting alone with no assistance in the planning or execution of this crime, entered Columbine High on the morning of April 20, 1999, armed to the teeth, and promptly began shooting up the place, leaving twelve fellow students and one teacher dead before turning their guns on themselves.

As with all the "big stories" flogged by the American media, the various avenues of the US press quickly fell in line behind this story, deftly avoiding any evidence that would tend to cast doubt on the official version of events. So while there has been some minor quibbling over insignificant details of the story (e.g. did the gunmen target athletes, blacks, and/or Christians?), few serious journalists have questioned the central thesis that the carnage at Columbine High that day was the work of Harris and Klebold acting alone.

Yet strangely enough, both the *Denver Post* and the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, the newspapers serving the greater Denver area (of which Littleton is a part), have provided coverage which has been consistently ignored by the media in general.

For the benefit of those living outside the Denver area, presented here you will find a few facts about the tragedy at Columbine of which you may be unaware and which tend to be at odds with the official report. Take, for example, the issue of how long the rampage lasted. One reporter on the scene wrote that: "The bloody rampage spanned four hours... By 3:45 p.m., shots still rang out inside the school (as) more than 200 law enforcement officers and four SWAT

teams tried to stop the gunmen and evacuate wounded high school students" [*Denver Post*, April 21, 1999]. Another quoted Jefferson County Sheriff John Stone, one of the first officials on the scene, as saying: "We had initial people there right away, but we couldn't get in. We were way outgunned" [Associated Press, April 20, 1999].

Echoing this sentiment was Terry Manwaring, commander of the Jefferson County SWAT team, who claimed: "I just knew the killers were armed and were better equipped than we were." The SWAT teams, therefore, made no effort to confront the killers [*Playboy*, March 2000].

The official report, meanwhile, contends that the "lunchtime rampage...ended after 45 minutes," and that, "Sometime after noon the killers stood near the library windows and turned their guns on themselves" [*Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2000]. Strange then that there would be shots ringing out some three-and-a-half hours later.

Stranger still is the notion that two teenagers with limited firearms training and armed only with shotguns and 9mm handguns would be able to outgun a veritable army of law enforcement officers, many with advanced paramilitary training and weapons. And you would think that the fact that the two were already dead would at least have slowed them down a bit.

Then there is the issue of the bombs strategically placed throughout the school prior to the shootings. Some of those involved in the investigation of the case were openly skeptical of the notion that the two boys could have transported and placed all the explosive devices that were found. One report noted that:

The 20-pound bomb found inside the Columbine High School kitchen suggests the two teenage suspects were aided by others in their plot to blow up the school, police said Thursday. Packed inside a duffle bag with a wired gasoline can—and surrounded with nails and BBs for maximum

killing power—the propane barbecue tank-bomb points to a wider conspiracy, police said. [*Denver Post*, April 23, 1999]

Likewise, Jefferson County District Attorney Dave Thomas was quoted as saying: “It is obvious to me that they couldn’t have carried them all in at the same time, plus the four weapons” [*Denver Post*, May 5, 1999]. And sheriff department spokesman Steve Davis added that: “From day one we’ve always felt like there was a very good possibility that more people were involved” [Associated Press, May 14, 1999].

Ultimately recovered, according to the final report, were “95 home-made explosive devices,” including two bombs fashioned from propane cylinders [*Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2000]. Picture, if you will, two teenagers strolling unnoticed into a high school, each carrying two firearms, a propane tank-bomb, and some 50 other explosive devices, as well as an abundant supply of ammunition.

Picture them then proceeding to carefully place each of these 95 bombs throughout the school, still unnoticed and undisturbed by faculty or other students. Nothing unusual about that. Just an average day at an American high school. Yet the possibility is clearly there that there may have been more people involved. Many of the witnesses, at any rate, clearly think so:

Jefferson County Sheriff John P. Stone raised the specter of a third Columbine High gunman anew Tuesday, saying some students have named another suspect. “There was quite possibly one other person shooting,” Stone said. “We do have witness statements.” The statements came from “students who were witnesses at the scene when this was going down,” and they agreed on the third person’s identity, he said. [*Denver Post*, May 5, 1999]

In fact, one initial report from Littleton began: “Three young men in fatigues and black trench coats opened fire at a suburban Denver high school Tuesday...,” and also noted that a “third young man was led away from the school in handcuffs more than four hours after the attack, and student Chris Wisher said: ‘He’s one of the ones who shot at us’” [Associated Press, April 20, 1999]. This third suspect has, oddly enough, never been identified or even mentioned again by the press.

In a televised interview, the mother of a student who had escaped the attack quoted her daughter as saying that she “looked up and saw a gunman in a black trench coat with a very huge gun.... He had

dark brown hair, thick bushy eyebrows, and was very ugly,” a description that clearly did not fit either Harris or Klebold. When asked if the gunman was a student, the mother replied that: “She didn’t recognize him as a student. No. Not as a student” [KUSA-TV, April 20, 1999].¹

Even more disturbing is a report that, “Dozens of witnesses interviewed by police after the crime claimed that from five to eight individuals participated in the shooting that left 15 people dead, including the killers, and more than 20 injured” [*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, July 29, 1999]. Five to eight individuals? Dozens of witnesses? Something definitely seems to be a bit peculiar here.

It is certainly understandable that some witnesses could have trouble recalling some of the details of the attack. In a situation of this nature, extreme levels of fear and confusion can cloud one’s recollection. In the ensuing chaos, some witnesses could easily be confused about the number of shooters.

Nevertheless, there is a considerable difference between two gunmen and eight gunmen—the latter being pretty much a small army. Is it really possible for dozens of eyewitnesses to be mistaken about the additional three to six gunmen? This issue could possibly be cleared up by examining the autopsy reports of the various victims. Unfortunately, that isn’t likely to happen. It seems that:

The autopsy reports on the Columbine High School victims will not be released to the public, a Jefferson County judge ruled Friday.... Chief District Judge Henry E. Nieto rejected arguments by 18 news organizations.... The coroner’s office, district attorney and the family of killer Dylan Klebold joined the 12 families in getting the documents sealed. [*Denver Post*, May 29, 1999]

Another question that could be cleared up by the release of the autopsy reports is the alleged suicides of the two shooters, seeing as how “Klebold was shot once in the left side of the head, apparently by one of two 9 mm weapons... [T]he wound’s location puzzles some investigators. They believe that if the right-handed Klebold had shot himself, the wound should have been on the other side” [*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, June 13, 1999].

Very clever, those investigators. Clever enough, in fact, to come up with an explanation for this anomaly. Some authorities now believe (or claim to, anyway) that Harris shot Klebold before shooting himself. It seems just as likely, however, that a third party shot Klebold, and perhaps Harris as well.

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Moving on to what is perhaps the most bizarre aspect of the case, we come now to the infamous videotape. You know, the one that was made in 1997, two years before the actual assault, and which “depicts gun-toting, trench coat-wearing students moving through Columbine’s halls and ends with a special-effects explosion of the school.” The one that was co-produced by “the son of the FBI’s lead agent in the investigation” [Associated Press, May 8, 1999].

There’s certainly nothing unusual about that. It’s actually standard FBI procedure to have your son shoot a training film for a high-school slaughter a couple of years beforehand. It’s also standard procedure to have your other son on hand to eyewitness the crime. Which is why “[Agent Dwayne Fuselier’s] youngest son, Brian, was in the school cafeteria at the time and managed to escape after seeing one of the bombs explode” [Denver Post, May 13, 1999].

It should also be noted that another “student who helped in the production of the film [was] Brooks Brown...” [Associated Press, May 8, 1999]. For those not fortunate enough to be home on the day of the shooting watching the live cable coverage, Brooks Brown was the student enthusiastically granting interviews to anyone who would stick a microphone in his face.

He claimed to have encountered Harris and Klebold as they were approaching the school, and to have been warned away by the pair from entering the campus that day. According to his story, he heeded the warning and was therefore not present during the shooting spree. Fair enough, but let’s try to put these additional pieces of the puzzle together.

First, we have the son of the lead investigator, who was obviously a member of the so-called Trenchcoat Mafia, involved in the filming of a pre-enactment of the crime. Then we have a second son of the lead investigator being at ground zero of the rampage. And finally we have a close associate of both the Fuselier brothers and of Harris and Klebold (and a co-filmmaker) being in the company of the shooters immediately before they entered the school, this by his own admission.

And yet, strangely enough, none of them was connected in any way to the commission of this crime, according to official reports. Not even Brooks Brown, who should have, if nothing else, noticed that the pair had some unusually large bulges under their trench coats on this particular day. At the very least, one would think that there might be just a little bit of a conflict of interest for the FBI’s lead investigator.

This does not appear to be the case, however, as “FBI spokesman Gary Gomez said there was ‘absolutely no discussion’ of reassign-

ing Fuselier, 51, a psychologist, in the wake of the disclosures in Friday’s *Denver Rocky Mountain News*. ‘There is no conflict of interest,’ Gomez said” [Denver Rocky Mountain News, May 8, 1999]. And as no less an authority than Attorney General Janet Reno has stated: “It has been a textbook case of how to conduct an investigation, of how to do it the right way” [Denver Post, April 23, 1999].

So there you have it. There was no conspiracy, there were no accomplices. It was, as always, the work of a lone gunman (OK, two lone gunmen in this case). But if there were a wider conspiracy, you may wonder, what would motivate such an act? What reason could there be for sacrificing fourteen young lives?

Many right-wingers would have you believe that such acts are orchestrated—or at the very least rather cynically exploited—as a pretext for passing further gun-control legislation. The government wants to scare the people into giving up their right to bear arms, or so the thinking goes. And there is reason to believe that this could well be a goal.

It is not, however, the only—or even the primary—goal, but rather a secondary one at best. The true goal is to further traumatize and brutalize the American people. This has in fact been a primary goal of the State for quite some time, dating back at least to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on that fateful day in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

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The strategy is now (as it was then) to inflict blunt-force trauma on all of American society, and by doing so to destroy

any remaining sense of community and instill in the people deep feelings of fear and distrust, of hopelessness and despair, of isolation and powerlessness. And the results have been, it should be stated, rather spectacular.

With each school shooting, and each act of “domestic terrorism,” the social fabric of the country is ripped further asunder. The social contracts that bound us together as a people with common goals, common dreams, and common aspirations have been shattered. We have been reduced to a nation of frightened and disempowered individuals, each existing in our own little sphere of isolation and fear.

And at the same time, we have been desensitized to ever-rising levels of violence in society. This is true of both interpersonal violence as well as violence by the State, in the form of judicial executions, spiraling levels of police violence, and the increased militarization of foreign policy and of America’s borders.

We have become, in the words of the late George Orwell, a society in which “the prevailing mental condition [is] controlled insanity.” And under these conditions, it becomes increasingly difficult for the

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American people to fight back against the supreme injustice of twenty-first century Western society. Which is, of course, precisely the point.

For a fractured and disillusioned people, unable to find a common cause, do not represent a threat to the rapidly encroaching system of global fascism. And a population blinded by fear will ultimately turn to "Big Brother" to protect them from nonexistent and/or wholly manufactured threats.

As General McArthur stated back in 1957: "Our government has kept us in a perpetual state of fear...with the cry of grave national emergency. Always there has been some terrible evil at home or some monstrous foreign power that was going to gobble us up if we did not blindly rally behind it...."

Perhaps this is all just groundless conspiracy theorizing. The possibility does exist that the carnage at Columbine High School unfolded exactly as the official report tells us that it did. And even if that proves not to be the case, there really is no need to worry. It is all just a grand illusion, a choreographed reality. Only the death and suffering are real.

Postscript

As the dust settled over Columbine High, other high-profile shootings would rock the nation: at schools, in the workplace, in a church, and—in Southern California's San Fernando Valley—at a Jewish community center where a gunman quickly identified as Buford Furrow opened fire on August 10, 1999. This man, who later would claim that his intent was to kill as many people as possible, had received extensive firearms and paramilitary training, both from the US military and from militia groups.

Shooting in an enclosed area that was fairly heavily populated, Furrow fired a reported 70 rounds from his assault rifle. By design or act of God, no one was killed and only a handful of people were injured, including three children and a teenager. None of the injuries was life-threatening, and all the victims have fully recovered.

With a massive police dragnet descending on the city, Furrow fled, abandoning his rolling arsenal of a vehicle. Not far from the crime scene, he stopped to catch up on some shopping and get a haircut. Along the way, his aim having improved considerably, Furrow killed a postal worker with a single headshot, for no better reason than because he was Asian and, therefore, "non-white."

At about this same time, Furrow car-jacked a vehicle from an Asian woman. Though this woman—besides being obviously non-white—

was now a key witness who could place Furrow at the scene and identify the vehicle he had fled in, she was left shaken but very much alive. Having taken great risks to obtain her vehicle, Furrow promptly abandoned it, choosing instead to take a taxi.

In an unlikely turn of events, this taxi would safely transport Furrow all the way to Las Vegas, Nevada. Having successfully eluded one of the most massive police dragnets in San Fernando Valley's history (which had the appearance of a very well-planned training exercise), and having made it across state lines to relative safety, Furrow proceeded directly to the local FBI office to turn himself in. No word yet as to whether Dwayne Fuselier was flown in to head up the investigation.

Meanwhile, in Littleton, Colorado, the death toll continued to mount. On May 6, 2000, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that a Columbine High student had been found hanged. His death was ruled a suicide even though, "Friends were mystified, saying there were no signs of turmoil in the teenager's life." One noted that he had "talked to him the night before, and it didn't seem like anything was wrong."

The young man had been a witness to the shooting death of teacher Dave Sanders. His was the fourth violent death surrounding Columbine High in just over a year since the shooting, bringing the body count to nineteen. Very little information was released concerning this most recent death, with the coroner noting only that: "Some things should remain confidential to the family" [*Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 2000].

On February 14, 2000, two fellow Columbine students were shot to death in a sandwich shop just a few blocks from the school. The shootings, which lacked any clear motive, have yet to be explained. In yet another incident, the mother of a student who was shot and survived "walked into a pawnshop in October, asked to see a gun, loaded it and shot herself to death" [*Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 2000].

Unexplained was why the shopkeeper would have supplied her with the ammunition for the gun. Perhaps she brought her own, though if she had access to ammunition, chances are that she would also have had access to a gun. Such are the mysteries surrounding the still-rising death toll in Littleton, Colorado.

Endnote

1. The KUSA-TV interview was also broadcast on MSNBC. A transcript is posted at the Konformist Website <www.konformist.com/1999/colorado/notstudent.htm>.